



MEDIA ADVISORY

February 23, 2016

Contacts:

Doug Carlson, Information Officer – (916) 653-5114

Doug.Carlson@water.ca.gov

Ted Thomas, Information Officer – (916) 653-9712

Ted.Thomas@water.ca.gov

Elizabeth Scott, Information Officer – (916) 712-3904 (mobile at survey site)

Elizabeth.Scott@water.ca.gov

DWR's Next Media-Focused Snow Survey Scheduled for March 1 *Electronic Readings Will Be More Representative of Snowpack Conditions Statewide*

SACRAMENTO – News media are invited to the Department of Water Resources March 1 media-oriented snow survey at Phillips Station off Highway 50 near Sierra-at-Tahoe Road approximately 90 miles east of Sacramento. This will be DWR's third such survey of the winter.

**IMPORTANT NEW REQUIREMENT: TO ENTER THIS PRIVATE PROPERTY,
MEDIA MUST SIGN IN AT THE CABIN NEAR HIGHWAY 50. SEE MAP BELOW.**

Frank Gehrke, chief of the California Cooperative Snow Surveys Program, will measure the snowpack at Phillips Station and report his findings at approximately 11 a.m. Media should arrive at least 30 minutes earlier and sign in.

As usual, Gehrke cautions that the Phillips readings should not be interpreted as typical of the statewide snowpack. Regional and statewide conditions as reported by the remote sensor network, are updated daily at the California Data Exchange Center [here](#).

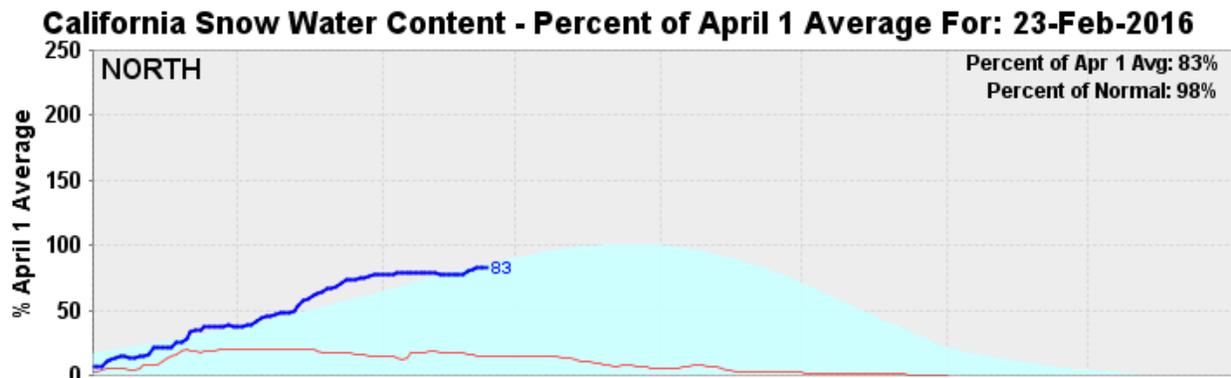
Despite the hopes of many Californians that El Niño conditions in the Pacific [once again](#) might deliver prodigious rain and snowfall, precipitation this water year is only about 5 percent above average since October 1 as of today at the stations monitored continuously by DWR, and the statewide snowpack water content is 7 percent below normal for February 23.

Precipitation since October 1 in the critical northern California watershed is 7 percent above average for today's date: http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cgi-progs/products/PLOT_ESI.pdf Northern California reservoir storage and the snowpack benefited from storms in January, but precipitation during the first two weeks of February was virtually nonexistent statewide. All major reservoirs except Lake Folsom remain below their historical averages for late February: <http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/resapp/getResGraphsMain.action>

The Phillips snow course is one of more than 224 courses that will be measured manually during a 10-day window around March 1 to determine the water content of the snowpack, which normally contributes about 30 percent of California's water when it melts.

The chart below tracks the water content of the snowpack in the Northern Sierra Nevada this winter (blue line) and all of last winter (red line) as a percentage of the average for the date. The shaded blue area represents the average water content throughout the snow season as measured electronically at remote snow sensors. The number at the end of the blue line is the

water content as a percentage of the April 1 average, when snowpack historically is at its peak. The other regions [similarly show water content that is below average](#) for this date.



Below-normal precipitation and warm temperatures throughout the winter months last year combined to create a historically meager snowpack. The statewide snowpack's water content at the start of February and March was only 23 percent and 19 percent of average respectively on those dates.

By April 1, electronic readings showed the snowpack's water content was 5 percent of normal for that date, the lowest on record. The scant snowpack and subsequent drop in snowmelt runoff were major contributors to confirming California's fourth consecutive year of drought.

Today's statewide snowpack water equivalent of 21.5 inches is 93 percent of the historical average for February 23. DWR's drought managers have said the snowpack's water content will have to be much greater than normal to have a significant effect on California's drought, which now is nearly five months into its fifth consecutive year.

Media should monitor road conditions and be prepared to equip vehicles with chains. Wear appropriate footwear; the snow at Phillips is deep. The survey will begin at 11 a.m. Media should not arrive before 10 a.m. due to the landowner's concerns. Early arrivals may be towed. Park only in designated areas and not along Sierra-at-Tahoe Road. Media must sign in with on-site Information Officer (see orange arrow on graphic; Elizabeth Scott's mobile number is shown above). DWR will distribute a press release with survey results by early afternoon. "Live" Periscope coverage of the Phillips Station survey will be carried on DWR's [Twitter](#) page. DWR will post reminders on Twitter before the survey. Raw video from the Periscope feed will be posted here: <http://bit.ly/23NXgqe>.



Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared a state of drought emergency on January 17, 2014. His April 1, 2015 proclamation mandated a 25-percent statewide reduction in water use. Visit <http://drought.ca.gov> to learn how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.

Electronic snowpack readings are available on the Internet at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/snowapp/sweq.action> For earlier readings, click the calendar icon below the map on the page, select a date and then Refresh Data.

Water Year 2016 precipitation can be found at the following link:

http://cdec.water.ca.gov/snow_rain.html. Look in the right-hand column for the Northern Sierra 8-station index for updated rainfall readings in the critical northern portion of the state, as well as the San Joaquin 5-station and Tulare Basin 6-station links.

Electronic reservoir readings are at:

<http://cdec.water.ca.gov/cdecapp/resapp/getResGraphsMain.action>

For a broader snapshot of current and historical weather conditions, see DWR's Drought and Water Conditions pages:

California's Most Significant Droughts--Comparing Historical and Recent Conditions:

http://water.ca.gov/waterconditions/docs/California_Significant_Droughts_2015_small.pdf

Drought Breaking News Page:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/waterconditions/>

Water Conditions Page:

<http://water.ca.gov/waterconditions/waterconditions.cfm>

For water conservation tips, visit Save Our Water:

<http://saveourwater.com>



Average Statewide Snowpack Water Content on March 1: 26.3 Inches

Average Statewide Snowpack Water Content on April 1: 28 Inches

Percentage of Average Snow Water Content on or about March 1:

1950	109%
1951	87%
1952	228%
1953	104%
1954	99%
1955	91%
1956	192%
1957	69%
1958	120%
1959	93%
1960	65%
1961	46%

1962	150%
1963	25%
1964	66%
1965	121%
1966	118%
1967	119%
1968	76%
1969	Highest 263%
1970	84%
1971	125%
1972	107%
1973	154%
1974	109%
1975	116%
1976	34%
1977	25%
1978	170%
1979	111%
1980	130%
1981	60%
1982	92%
1983	211%
1984	105%
1985	87%
1986	143%
1987	56%
1988	61%
1989	83%
1990	70%
1991	18%
1992	73%
1993	205%
1994	82%
1995	146%
1996	107%
1997	119%
1998	180%
1999	121%
2000	115%
2001	84%
2002	93%
2003	81%
2004	116%
2005	135%
2006	83%

2007		68%
2008		128%
2009		82%
2010		106%
2011		124%
2012		34%
2013		84%
2014		31%
2015	Lowest	19%